



# The Front Porch

The Newsletter of the City of Springfield,  
Planning and Development Department's  
Neighborhood Conservation Office  
Fall/Winter 2000 Issue

## Mission:

Neighborhoods are the building blocks of our community. Springfield must strive to promote strong neighborhoods that instill pride in their residents. Therefore, the Neighborhood Conservation Office is committed to working with the community to ensure strong viable neighborhoods.

## City Code Now Available on the Internet

The *Code of the City of Springfield, Missouri* (G.O. 4845) is now accessible on the Internet. Access to the City Code via the Internet follows the completion of a thorough revision and recodification.

The City Code revisions accomplish two important things. First, the duplication of Codes is eliminated. Second, vague and outdated Code provisions were removed and rewritten. These steps help make the City Code more user-friendly for all interested parties.

In order to complete this process, the City of Springfield enlisted the help of the Municipal Code Corporation. The efforts of City staff in this large endeavor were rewarded when City Council adopted the revisions in July of this year.

In order to accompany the process of updating and recodification, City officials decided to make the Code more accessible to all residents of the city. Until now, the Code was solely packaged in large, heavy binders. Using these books could be rather time consuming and inconvenient. As a result, City officials made the decision to publish the Code on the Internet.

The City Code can now be found at the following website: <http://www.muniCode.com>. In addition, the City Code can be accessed via the City website at: <http://www.springfield.missouri.org/gov>.

The recent revision of the City Code was the first since 1981. The City contracted with the Municipal Code Corporation to help with the update, and to provide ongoing support. "Ongoing support" means that efforts will be made to ensure that the public always has access to the most current version of the Code.

There were two main objectives when rewriting the Code. First, while the recent revision tidied up the Code's various articles and sections, substantive changes were avoided. Next, the intention was to make the Code as accessible to the public as possible. Placement of the Code on the Internet is viewed as one of the easiest ways for the public to access all City Codes and regulations.



*The transition from hard copy to the Internet has made Springfield's City Code much more accessible to all interested citizens. Therefore, these large books can be replaced with a more modern substitute in order to find necessary information.*

This new option is a beneficial one for all parties. Internet access to the Code by the general public reduces City costs of duplication due to citizen requests for all or portions of the document. Furthermore, while not everyone has access to the Internet via home computer, Internet access is available at the City's public libraries for everyone.

EP



# Neighborhood Improvement Districts: North Parkwood's Example of Public Empowerment has been Little Used

*Residents in Neighborhood A want a new amenity (as in a park, brick sidewalks, street lights, etc.). The City does not have adequate funds to provide the amenity. Besides, residents in Neighborhoods B and C feel that the infrastructure is adequate throughout the city. Neighborhoods B and C certainly do not want the City to spend their tax dollars on an amenity that they feel is not necessary — an amenity already in another part of the city. How can Neighborhood A acquire their desired amenity without burdening residents in Neighborhood B and C? One Springfield neighborhood already discovered the answer - establish a Neighborhood Improvement District (NID).*

In 1992, Joplin Trailer of Springfield, Inc., was preparing to move their truck repair facility to an industrial-zoned property on N. Barnes Avenue. The roughly 5.6 acres seemed to be perfect for their facility. The only problem was that the site was surrounded on three sides by the North Parkwood Subdivision. Residents in the single-family subdivision were concerned about having a seemingly incompatible use directly adjacent to their homes. Because the property was zoned appropriately, there seemed to be no legal protection for the residents of the neighborhood. Construction of the facility was about to begin when the involved parties discovered Senate Bill Number 8, the "Neighborhood Improvement District Act" (NIDA).



*This neighborhood site was saved from a potential industrial use through NID. It now serves as a city park.*

The NIDA allows a geographic area to be created by vote or petition whereby property owners within the area subject themselves to special tax assessments to pay for a public improvement. The special tax assessment allows funds to be raised for an improvement above and beyond the general operating budget of a city or county. The public improvement occurs within the boundaries of the resulting NID. In the case of Parkwood subdivision, residents used the NIDA to purchase Joplin Trailer's property. Each property owner within the Parkwood subdivision now pays an annual assessment

generally less than \$90 (for a period of twenty years) to fund the property's purchase cost and long-term maintenance. The silver lining in this self-imposed taxation is the creation of Parkwood Park. Park benches and swing sets now occupy what could have been a truck repair facility.

Property acquisition and park development are two types of public improvement that a NID can fund. Tax revenue generated from private property owners to pay NID bonds can fund a variety of landscaping, street and sidewalk improvements, parking facilities, street lights, etc.

The key to remember is that the choice of establishing a NID lies with affected property owners. The willingness of citizens to create a NID is a direct measure of how important a local public improvement project really is. In accordance with Senate Bill Number 8 (and policy established by City Council), property owner petitions requesting the creation of a NID must constitute the following:

- 66 2/3% of the property by area; and,
- 66 2/3% of the owners by parcel.

Successful NID petitions are an indisputable way to convince local officials that some projects of low priority for Springfield as a whole, are a high priority for specific neighborhoods. When it seems that there is no public funding mechanism for a localized project, a NID is a tool that empowers citizens. Unfortunately, it is an empowerment tool that has been little used — no NID has been created in Springfield since the Parkwood experience.

For more information on the NIDA, visit the Missouri General Assembly website at: [www.moga.state.mo.us](http://www.moga.state.mo.us) or call the Reviser of Statutes at (573) 526-1288. For more information on the City of Springfield's NID policies and process, contact the Neighborhood Conservation Office at 864-1033. For information on Parkwood subdivision's NID experience, you can reach Shirley Hanes of the Parkwood Survival Association at 869-8953. **EP**

### "The Front Porch"

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## State Money for Your Projects

Are you interested in a project to improve your community? Are you unsure of how to find the money to cover the necessary expenses? If so, your problem may be solved. Funding is now available to assist worthy, community-based efforts.

The Missouri Department of Economic Development is turning tax season into payday for many communities. Through the Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP), many improvement projects, which would otherwise go unfunded, are being financially supported.

The program utilizes an innovative concept. First, the state identifies particular community needs. Then, it forfeits part of its business tax revenues to fund these programs.

Although this program is not new, the levels of funding currently being offered are. With the recent passage of state legislation, approximately \$18 million is now available for NAP projects. This extraordinary amount of money can produce unimaginable effects within communities across the state.

There are five main categories in which grant funds will be available. These categories are: community services, crime prevention, education, job training, and physical revitalization. While NAP has certain restrictions on the ways in which the funds are utilized, many possibilities exist.



*The Discovery Center of Springfield, pictured above, was able to secure approximately \$250,000 to provide a learning environment for the youth of the Springfield area.*

Many applications from the Springfield area can be used to provide examples. The Discovery Center of Springfield acquired funds to develop its current educational facility and support the redevelopment of the center-city neighborhood. Boys and Girls Town applied for funding to help develop our community's youth into productive citizens. The list of successful applicants goes on: Springfield Victory Mission's attempt to feed, clothe, and shelter our area's poor, Ozarks Food Harvest's plan to feed and educate low-income people, and the Greater Ozarks Association for Retarded Citizens' request to assist in the construction of an activity center.

As shown in the above examples, a variety of projects can be supported. The number of worthy efforts is boundless. Special community needs should be identified in order to take advantage of this program. These specific needs can be identified within individual neighborhoods or for the whole area.

The Neighborhood Assistance Program has some basic prerequisites of all applicants. The applicant must either be a not-for-profit corporation (Chapter 355, RSMo) or hold 501(c)3 filing status with the Internal Revenue Service. Businesses that accept all financial and administrative responsibility for the project are also eligible. Religious organizations may be eligible for application, but only under specific circumstances.

NAP strives to retain accountability with the allocation of its monetary resources. Therefore, projects that are accepted should be goal-oriented. Having both clearly defined goals and objectives that can be tracked are essential to success in this program.

Applications for this program will be available starting in mid-November. Proper completion of the application is very important. Therefore, NAP offers technical assistance to those in need. Final proposals must be submitted to the NAP office in Jefferson City sometime in February.

For more information on the Neighborhood Assistance Program, or to request an application, contact the Missouri Department of Economic Development at 573-751-4849. An on-line application is available at: <http://www.ecodev.state.mo.us/cd/nap>. Early action is recommended to take advantage of this beneficial program. **EP**



## Publication Spotlight

- ***Vision 20/20 Elements***

These elements of the Springfield – Greene County Comprehensive Plan provide a framework for the growth and development of the community for the next twenty years. Created by citizen participants who took part in the *Vision 20/20* public input process, the Center City; Community Facilities; Community Physical Image and Character; Historic Preservation; Neighborhoods; Parks, Open Space and Greenways elements have been adopted by City Council. The elements are a guide for public and private interests to create the future envisioned by the community. To obtain copies of the six *Vision 20/20* elements adopted by City Council, visit the Department of Planning and Development offices at 840 Boonville, or call 864-1033.

- ***Welcome to Phelps Grove/Rountree Neighborhood Brochures***

The Phelps Grove and Rountree Neighborhood Areas are subject to unique protective regulations. Special standards in the neighborhoods address concerns ranging from overcrowding and parking, to parties, trash and weeds. The *Welcome to Phelps Grove/Rountree Neighborhood* brochures consolidate all of the neighborhood's unique standards into a reader-friendly format. These brochures are intended to benefit residents, property owners and tenants. The *Welcome to Phelps Grove/Rountree* brochures can be obtained at the Department of Planning and Development offices at 840 Boonville, or call 864-1033.

